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T H E

AMERICAN NATURALIST.

Vol. II.—JUNE, 1868.—No. 4.



THE WARBLERS.

BY T. MARTIN TRIPPE.



OF all the various tribes of the feathered race that pour into the Northern and Middle States every spring, there is not one that will compare in beauty of plumage, and exquisiteness of form, with the family of the Warblers (*Sylvicolidæ*). Combining all that we admire in birds, and visiting us only in the most delightful season of the year, it is no wonder that they have been so much praised and admired. And yet they are very imperfectly known; even the specific rank of some of them seems scarcely to be established; while the breeding habits of many are as little known now, as they were in the days of Audubon and Wilson. Of late years, however, much has been accomplished in this direction; and, before long, we may hope to become as well acquainted with all of them, even the rarest, as we now are with the common yellow warbler.

Although some of the warblers are undoubtedly very rare, their general scarcity has been much exaggerated. That this should have been so, fifty years ago, is not surprising, when we consider the extremely short period during which most of them are found with us, sometimes not exceeding two or three days. In some instances, I have known a particular

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species to be extremely abundant during a single forenoon, while scarcely a single individual was to be seen during the rest of the spring, so quickly do they come and go. But that this should still be the case; that errors, which were made, perhaps unavoidably, by Audubon and Wilson, should still be perpetuated, is a matter of surprise and regret. Some species are much more abundant now than they were in the days of the older ornithologists, and some probably scarcer. Thus, both Audubon and Wilson mention the chestnut-sided warbler as one of the rarest of all, whereas it is now very abundant. Another general error was, in stating that they all withdrew to the far north to breed. There are, probably, very few of the species that enter the New England States that will not be found to raise their young in some part of its territory, large portions of which have not as yet been scientifically explored. Little attention, likewise, seems to have been paid to their notes and songs; and many, even, who are entitled to be ranked among the highest of our songsters, have been considered as destitute of musical ability altogether. The warblers have always been favorites of mine, and I have paid much attention to their habits and notes, particularly the latter. In the following brief sketch it is my intention to give a short account of each of the members of this interesting family, and to notice, more especially, such particulars as are not generally known, in regard to their songs, as have fallen under my observations.

The Pine-creeping Warbler (*Dendroica pinus*) is the first of the family to visit us in the spring, and arrives, in my locality in the latitude of New York, about the first of April. I have never known it to be very abundant, though it is seldom scarce. It affects, principally, the evergreen woods, but is often met with in other places. Its song, or rather note, for it can scarcely be said to have a song, is a rapid chatter, quite different from that of any other warbler, though it bears some resemblance to that of the *Myiodioctes pusillus*.

Soon after the pine-warbler has arrived, generally not more than four or five days, the Yellow Red-poll'd Warbler (*D. palmarum*) makes his appearance. Not very familiar, and yet not shy, they betake themselves to the deciduous woods, where, in numerous companies or small parties, they spend a couple of weeks, and then pursue their journey north. I have never heard them utter any other notes than a sharp "chuck," and a low chirp, which seems to be common to all the family, and can scarcely be distinguished in the different species. Unlike the other members of the particular subdivision of the family to which they belong, the Wood-warblers (*Sylvicoleæ*), they often descend to the ground, where they run about with as much agility as the Maryland yellow-throat. Another peculiarity which characterizes them is the habit they have of jerking their tails, in the same way as the pewee, though they do not do it nearly so often as that bird does. In October, they return in large numbers, dwelling now in the open fields and woods indifferently. They are the last of their tribe to leave us in the fall.

The Yellow-crowned Warbler (*D. coronata*) arrives about the time that the preceding species is leaving us, from the fifteenth to the twentieth of April. This is one of the most abundant and familiar of the class. It has a very sweet song, or warble, which it utters at short intervals in the early morning; its habits are too well known to require any farther notice.

Another bird of this family, differing in name as well as in general appearance from its associates, is the Black and White Creeper (*Mniotilta varia*), which, although a creeper by name, is a true warbler. It arrives about the twentieth of April, and although most of them pass farther north to breed, many spend the summer with us. Its breeding habits are well known; and, from various causes, it is one of the most favorite of the cow-blackbird's adopted nurses. I once found a nest of this bird with eight eggs in it, *five* of which were those of the cow-bird, and the other three her own.

There was much dispute among ornithologists some time ago as to whether the cow-bird ever laid more than one egg in the same nest. It was finally admitted that there were sometimes two placed in the same nest, but that one of these usually proved abortive; the five eggs that I found, however, were all sound, and had, apparently, been hatching for some days. Professor Baird, of the Smithsonian Institution, informed me, that, in company with Dr. Brewer, he found *three* eggs in a nest of the creeper, and that they considered it a very extraordinary circumstance. This bird is so well known, that it is scarcely necessary to speak of its notes, of which it possesses quite a variety. Its most frequent note, in spring, is a very fine, almost shrill song; but besides this, it sometimes, though rarely, gives utterance to a soft, liquid warble, quite like that of the redstart.

It is, perhaps, superfluous to speak of the Yellow Warbler (*D. aestiva*). This, as is well known, is the commonest and most familiar of all its family; and, spending the spring and summer with us, all its habits have long been known. I cannot but think, however, that sufficient justice has not been done to its song. Some authors even seem to be ignorant of the fact that it has a song at all, only giving it credit for its rather harsh, but characteristic spring note. It has, however, a true *sylvicoline* warble, which is sufficiently pleasant in itself, but derives additional interest from its being heard late in summer, long after all other birds, except the vireos, have ceased to sing. During the latter part of July, and all through August, the yellow warbler may be heard singing in the early morning, or in the twilight; and his sweet, liquid notes, pleasing as they always were, but which were scarcely noticed at all in May and June, in the concert of finer and louder voices, now sound doubly sweet amid the silence that reigns among the feathered choir.

The Black-throated Blue Warbler (*D. Canadensis*) arrives about the first week in May, and takes up his quarters in the low and swampy woodlands, where he finds his insect prey

abundant. The females arrive some time after their mates, and stay later; indeed, this seems to be the case with all the warblers. They stay during the whole month, remaining longer than almost any other species. On their first appearance they have no note but a simple chirp, but just before they leave us, the males have a singular drawling song of four or five notes. They pass here again in the fall on their southern migration about the first of October, and are both at this time and in the spring quite abundant.

The Black-throated Green Warbler (*D. virens*). This species, rarer than the former, though still not at all scarce, arrives about the same time. It far excels the former species in its song, which is varied, sweet, and not inferior to that of any of the *Sylvicoleæ*. In autumn, they come down to us from the north along with the black-throated blue warblers, or else a little earlier, and, after remaining a short time, move off to the south.

The Chestnut-sided Warbler (*D. Pennsylvanica*) is one of the most beautiful members of its class. It was, if we may trust the accounts given to us by Audubon and Wilson, a rare species fifty years ago; now, however, it is one of our commonest warblers. In some seasons it is excessively abundant, at others not as much so; but it is never very scarce. Its stay with us in the spring is usually very short, the main body not remaining more than two or three days. While on its spring visit it has, occasionally, a very pleasant song, which it utters at short intervals, in the early morning.

Somewhat resembling the chestnut-sided warbler in its coloring, but very different in its habits, is the Bay-breasted Warbler (*D. castanea*). It is one of the last to arrive, and, owing to the fact that by that time the foliage is pretty dense, and that it makes but a short stay, it is not very often seen. It is not quite so active as the other warblers, and keeps more on the lower boughs, seldom ascending to the tops of the trees. Early in the fall, about the middle of

September; it returns, and, associated with the black-polled warblers in large companies, haunts the groves and woods, being now more familiar than in the spring, and far more abundant. The young are totally different in their colors from the adults, and so closely resemble the young of the black-polled warbler, that it is often very difficult to distinguish them apart. I have never heard their spring love-notes; in fall, they have a faint chirp.

The Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) is one of the scarcest of the family. There are some peculiarities about the habits of this bird that deserve attention. Although excessively rare in spring, perhaps more so than any other species, it is, in autumn, quite often seen, at least in this locality. It has never been my fortune to meet with one in spring, though I have seen many in the fall; judging from analogy, it must pass through the Middle States along with the mourning warbler toward the latter part of May, or beginning of June. It returns late in September, and remains but a short time. Of its habits and notes I know nothing, except that in autumn it frequents low, bushy swamps, such as the Maryland yellow-throat chooses for his home, and utters, at times, a feeble chirp. Why it should be so exceedingly rare in spring, while in the fall it is comparatively common, I can scarcely even conjecture; perhaps it may choose a different route for its northern migration from what it pursues on its southern. The same circumstance may be noticed in the migrations of many other species, though in a much less marked degree.

The Blue-winged Yellow Warbler (*Helminthophaga pinus*) is one of that subdivision of the warbler family called the "Worm-eaters," or, in scientific language, *Vermivoreæ*. The members of this division are distinguished from the typical warblers by sharper and more pointed bills, by plainer colors, and, as a rule, by comparatively harsh and unmusical voices. Their habits partake more of the vireo character than the others; in fact, they bear nearly the same

relation to the *Vireonidæ*, that the *Myiodiocetæ*, of which the green black-capped warbler is a member, do to the *Muscicapidæ*, or Flycatchers. The blue-winged yellow warbler is one of those that spend the summer with us ; but though it is quite abundant during that season, I have never been fortunate enough to discover its nest, although I have repeatedly seen the young just fledged. It arrives about the tenth of May, and takes up its abode in the closest thickets and underbrush. Its note is very forcible and characteristic ; once heard, it will always be remembered. It is a rapid chirrup, nearly undescribable in words, though the following syllables bear some resemblance to it, *chūchich-k'-a-re-r' r' r' r' r' r'*, uttered very quickly. It leaves in August.

The Mourning Warbler (*Geothlypis Philadelphia*) is a very rare species, scarcely less so than the Connecticut warbler. It arrives late in spring, about the twenty-fifth of May, or first of June ; of its notes and habits I know nothing, having only seen one or two individuals. This and the Connecticut warbler have been considered by some ornithologists to be identical, but they are undoubtedly perfectly distinct.

One of the rarest of all is the Cape May Warbler (*D. tigrina*). Like the preceding, it is a late comer, arriving generally toward the end of May, and staying a very brief period. In the autumn it passes here, on its southward course, about the twentieth of September. Of its notes I know nothing, except that it has a faint chirp like all the other warblers ; and of its habits, nothing worthy of particular notice, except that it shows a preference to cedar, and other evergreen trees.

The Green Black-capped Warbler (*Myiodiocetes pusillus*) is one of those belonging to the section or genus intermediate between the warblers and flycatchers. It is very much nearer the former, however, than the latter ; and it is a matter of some little surprise, how it could have been ranked as a flycatcher. Audubon says that it passes through the Middle

States very quickly on its way northward; but I have seen it from the nineteenth to the thirtieth of May, though never in abundance. It keeps low down in the trees, and is fond of haunting thickets and open brush-fields. Its ordinary note is a sharp chirp, but occasionally it may be heard to utter a loud, rapid, chattering song, which it repeats at short intervals. It is distinguished by its activity, even among a class of birds preëminent for that quality.

The Canada Warbler (*Myiodioides Canadensis*) belongs to the same genus as the preceding, and like it was once classed as a flycatcher. It arrives about the middle of May along with the greater mass of warblers, and remains till the first of June. It is very unsuspicious, and more familiar in its habits than most of the warblers. With me, during some seasons, it is exceedingly abundant; at others it is scarcer, though never rare. It affects the lower branches principally, and is always very active. Its song is one of the most agreeable which we hear, though unfortunately it is seldom heard in this part of the country.

The Blue Warbler (*D. cærulea*), is a very rare species; that is to say, in the New England and Northern-middle States, its natural home being the south and the south-west, where it is extremely abundant. It very rarely reaches the New England States, though in the southern parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey it sometimes occurs in considerable numbers. In a "Catalogue of birds observed in New York, Long and Staten Islands, and the adjacent parts of New Jersey," by Geo. N. Lawrence, no mention of it is made, although the list is very full and complete, embracing many species not before known to occur in those localities. I have only once seen it, and that was on the ninth of May, when I saw a single individual. In general appearance it resembled the female black-throated blue warbler, for which, indeed, I at first mistook it. It had no note of any kind.

The Maryland Yellow-throat (*Geothlypis trichas*) belongs to the *Geothlypeæ*, or Ground Warblers, so named because

they show a marked preference for the ground, seldom ascending to the tops of the trees as the others do, but being always found in the low thickets and bushes; or even on the ground. The present species is, perhaps, the best known, and most familiar of all its tribe; indeed it could not have otherwise obtained its familiar name of "Yellow-throat." It is scarcely necessary to add anything concerning it; suffice it to say, that it holds a most important position in the woodland choir; there is scarcely another bird that we should miss more. Without it, the thickets and coppices would seem almost uninhabited; and its song, simple though it is, would be sadly missed in August, when the hot summer sun has silenced the wood-thrush and the veery.

The Nashville Warbler (*Helminthophaga ruficapilla*) is, in this vicinity, quite an abundant species. It arrives about the twentieth of May, and, after staying a very short period, proceeds northward. During its stay it is shy and retiring, frequenting the tops of forest trees; occasionally it may be seen in orchards, and in the trees lining the brooks and swamps. It returns about the last week in September, remains a few days, and then moves off to the south. It has quite a fine song, which resembles that of the yellow warbler more nearly than any other. Many of the warblers have songs, so closely resembling each other, that it is impossible to describe them accurately in words, though they can at once be distinguished in the woods by the practised ornithologist.

The Blue Yellow-backed Warbler (*Parula Americana*) is one of the smallest, as well as one of the most beautiful of all. Usually very abundant, it is sometimes rather scarce, and its migrations seem to be somewhat irregular. It arrives in the second week in May, and remains a considerable time with us. About the time the apple and pear trees are in bloom, it is most abundant; and any one visiting orchards then, is sure to see it flitting among the blossoms like a winged gem, the dark blue and gold of the bird contrasting

beautifully with the pure white, or delicate pink, of the flowers. In autumn, it is one of the first, if not *the* first, to leave its northern abode and pass through the Middle States, appearing in my locality about the second or third week of September. After haunting, for a few weeks, the white-birch swamps, it moves southward, just as the black-throated blue warbler is arriving. The song of the blue yellow-back is a little sharp and lisping, yet quite varied, and very pleasant to be heard.

The Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitherus vermivorus*) is one of the very few warblers that are plainly attired, yet even it can make some pretensions to personal beauty; for it has four bands of jet-black on its head, and a dainty suit of light buff on its back. It is not at all common, arrives in the middle of May, and has at that time a rapid, chattering note. It always keeps near the ground, is fond of rustling among the dead leaves of a broken bough, and, besides its chattering song, has, in June, a series of odd notes much like those of the white-breasted nuthatch, but more varied and musical, though hardly entitled to be called a song. It remains with us during the summer, and although I have seen it during the breeding season evidently collecting food for its young, I have never been able to find its nest.

The Hooded Warbler (*Myiodiocetes mitratus*), is seldom seen as far north as the neighborhood of New York; in New England it is very rare. I have only observed two or three individuals; these were in low bushes, and seemed particularly active and restless. They are said to have a lively sort of warble, though I have never heard their notes.

Of the Prairie Warbler (*D. discolor*) I know but little. It is said to be abundant in many parts of New Jersey and Long Island, and to breed in those sections. It arrives in the neighborhood of New York in the first week in May, and remains till the autumn, frequenting, in spring, the orchards and gardens, and, in summer, the open, deserted fields and pastures. It has quite a variety of notes, some of which are very pleasing.

The Black-poll'd Warbler (*D. striata*), is the last of the tribe to arrive in spring, seldom appearing before the twentieth of May. It is a familiar species, being found, while with us, in gardens, orchards, and in the vicinity of houses, as well as in the woods. It is extremely active, and, when seen, is always darting in and out among the branches, so rapidly as almost to pain the eye in endeavoring to follow it. In the fall it returns very early, along with the blue yellow-backed warbler, in the middle of September, from which time until the end of the first week in October, it is very abundant. The young are then so much more numerous than the adults, that one sees twenty in the immature plumage, to one in the mature. As before stated, the young of this bird very closely resemble those of the bay-breasted warbler; so closely, in fact, that naturalists are puzzled to decide which of the two is the autumnal warbler of Wilson and Nuttall, the descriptions applying nearly as well to the one as to the other. It is probable, however, that Wilson did not distinguish between them, or else considered them merely as varieties of the same species. His detailed description of *Sylvia autumnalis* will certainly apply more nearly to the bay-breast; but when he comes to speak of its habits, his remarks apply to the *D. striata*, rather than to the *D. castanea*. All the ornithologists who wrote of the autumnal warbler, mention it as exceedingly abundant in the fall. The black-poll is then very common, as well as in the spring, while the bay-breast is never so. Audubon, and some other authors, find the *S. autumnalis* in the young of the Hemlock Warbler (*Sylvicola parus*); but their view must be incorrect, if the *S. parus* is, as Professor Baird asserts, merely the young of the Blackburnian warbler. During spring, the black-poll has a faint lisping song, of four or five syllables; in the fall, only a faint chirp.

The Blackburnian Warbler (*D. Blackburniæ*) is one of the most beautiful of all the warblers, for none can show more pleasing colors than the orange of its throat and breast.

It is a scarce species, arriving in the second or third week in May, and remaining till the first of June. In its habits it is shy and retiring, hiding itself in the thickest foliage. It sometimes utters an agreeable song. According to Giraud, it has been found breeding near Williamstown, Mass.

Another warbler, vying in beauty with the last, is the Black and Yellow Warbler (*D. maculosa*) ; and, to add to its attractiveness, its song is no less pleasing to the ear than its colors to the eye. About the middle of May it arrives, sometimes in great abundance, and again in very small numbers, in some seasons being scarcely seen at all ; in fall, it is not as common as in spring. Its notes are very soft and musical ; like the vireos, it sings while engaged in actively searching for food. It often darts after its prey, in the manner of the redstart, spreading its tail at the same time, as if to exhibit its beauty. In its motions, it is very quick, scarcely less so than the black-poll ; in its choice of abode, it seems to have no particular preference, haunting alike the woods, orchards, roadsides, and gardens.

The Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*) is the only representative we have of the *Setophagæ*, a subdivision of the warbler family, noted for the extreme brilliancy of their plumage. There are several species in Mexico and the adjacent portions of the United States, but only one ever enters the Northern or Middle States. The redstart is so named, it is supposed, from the color of its tail (German *roth*, red ; and *stert*, tail), and no more appropriate name could have been found to distinguish it, at least in the case of our bird ; for of all its characteristics, that which at once strikes the beholder, on first seeing it, is its broad red tail. In the woods, it can easily be recognized, however far off, or however momentary the glimpse one catches of it, by the peculiar motion of the tail, which it flirts about from side to side, opening and shutting it occasionally like a fan. Although Wilson states that the redstart remains all the summer in Pennsylvania, and

that it breeds there in abundance, it is seldom seen in this locality after the end of June, although from the beginning of May until that time it is exceedingly common. About the first of September it reappears, and in a short time becomes abundant, remaining so for a few weeks, when it disappears again. It has a number of notes, some of which are very agreeable, especially its spring warble, which has been well described by Nuttall. Its peculiar habits are too well known to require any farther comment.

These species are about all that are to be found in the New England States. There are a few, however, not enumerated above, that occasionally visit them, stragglers from their more proper places of abode. Of these, those that are most likely to occur are the Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*), which has been discovered on Long Island several times; the Golden-winged Warbler (*Helminthophaga chrysoptera*), which undoubtedly migrates as far north as Massachusetts; and the Tennessee Warbler (*Helminthophaga peregrina*), which has been shot in the neighborhood of New York City. The Orange-crowned Warbler (*Helminthophaga celata*), is also said to have been found in New York State; and, of course, may occur in the adjacent parts of New England. Its occurrence is very doubtful, however, and is still a subject of dispute.

It would scarcely be proper, in an account of the warbler family, to overlook the Water-thrushes (*Seiurus*), which are now generally classed among the *Sylvicoleæ*, or typical warblers, although their proper place in our systems has long been a matter of discussion. Audubon placed them among his *Motacillinæ*, or wagtails; while Wilson regarded them as true thrushes. Wilson, however, is not to be relied upon in matters relating to classification; he excelled as a descriptive naturalist, but not as a systematist. The specific rank of the water-thrushes, or wagtails, now seems to be universally acknowledged; and there can be little doubt, but that the position assigned to them by Professor Baird, is the correct

one. The reason why they were misunderstood so long, seems to have been their large size and plain colors, combined with a certain thrush-like appearance; they are, however, in their habits and notes, true warblers; more truly so, in fact, than the *Vermivoreæ*, or the *Geothlypeæ*.

Our commonest species is the Golden-crowned Thrush (*Seiurus auropallus*). It appears in the New England States in the first week of May, and, taking up its abode in the thickest woods, soon becomes abundant there. It runs along the ground with a graceful, wavering gait, wagging its tail all the while as if to preserve its balance, which seems every moment about to be overthrown. It often mounts to the boughs, from which it sends forth a loud, rattling chant, which can be heard at a considerable distance. At times, in the dusk of the evening or the early morning, it utters a finer song, clear and rapid as the canary's, ending almost always, however, in the usual chatter. While singing, it keeps high up among the trees, usually balancing itself on its wings like a skylark, descending just as it finishes its song. The only author in whom I find mention of this song is Nuttall, who has the credit of being one of our most observing naturalists. Late in summer, it has a sharp, clucking note, something like that of the water-thrush. Its curious nest has long been known; from it, it derives its name of "Oven-bird."

The Water-thrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*) arrives two or three weeks after the golden-crown; and, like most of the warblers, remains but a short time with us in the spring, passing on to the north to breed after a brief stay of eight or ten days. A singular circumstance in this bird's history is the fact of its never singing while here in spring; but during its visit on its return, it may often be heard. With all other birds, it is exactly the reverse. It haunts the same localities as the golden-crown, but shows more preference to the margins of small streams and ponds, along which it is seen running with the peculiar motion of

a sand-piper, for which, at a distance, it may easily be mistaken. Its ordinary note is a loud, sharp "cluck;" but in August, when it returns, it has a beautiful song, loud, clear, and sweet, rivalling that of the wood-thrush for beauty. It is quite abundant.

There is a closely allied form of the water-thrush, which is probably entitled to specific rank; the Large-billed Water-thrush (*Seiurus Ludovicianus*). Audubon first discovered it, and at the time considered it as distinct from the ordinary bird, but afterwards held it merely as a variety. The two birds certainly present greater difference than other nearly allied species of warblers that are acknowledged to be distinct, as the Connecticut and mourning warblers; and there is little doubt but that they are really different species. I have seldom seen the large-billed water-thrush, and am inclined to think that it is much rarer than the common wagtail, in this part of the country at least. In its habits and general appearance it seems to be the same as the *aurocapillus*, which may partly account for the fact that it is rarely noticed. I have never heard its notes; they are said to be eminently beautiful, almost equalling those of the nightingale.

NOTES ON TROPICAL FRUITS.

BY WILLIAM T. BRIGHAM.

It may be that one day we shall know the different varieties of oranges, of coffee, of sugar-cane, as we know the pears and apples of our own orchards; but at present we know only that some kinds are better than others. Travellers often describe in glowing terms the tropical fruits, but most of us know the banana (the apple of the tropics) by one typical form. The pleasant season for travelling in the tropics is not the season of fruits, so that many are not noticed by the